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PART IV: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES



Chapter 11

Cultural heritage and social context: research and management in Mozambique

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This chapter explores some of the challenges and possibilities related to researching Africa's cultural heritage – as well as the ways in which its conservation, and dissemination is put to popular and political use. In the context of this chapter, we define the terms 'dissemination' and 'conservation' in their broad sense. In other words, we understand conservation to be the processes involved in looking after a *place*¹ so as to retain its *cultural significance*, including its past and present aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual value. Thus we see cultural significance as being embodied in a place through a whole range of elements that represent tangible and intangible heritage.² We also acknowledge that places can have a range of values for different individuals or groups of people. We understand dissemination as the promotion of knowledge and awareness about the cultural significance of aspects of heritage, and we see dissemination as a prerequisite for conservation.

Knowledge production concerning African cultural heritage (such as surveys of archaeological sites and the interpretation of written material or cultural practices) is typically conducted by research institutions (and often in collaboration with international partners). Yet dissemination and conservation are typically left to the local authorities. In many cases, these authorities lack the practical skills, academic insight or political influence needed to adequately fulfil this mandate. This leaves the field open for political and other forms of interference, and this in turn affects which aspects of cultural heritage are selected for dissemination and conservation, as well as the means and modes through which this is carried out.

In some cases, if tackled at all, archaeological and historical research is guided by political motives, and conservation is made to suit these ends. In Eritrea, for example, archaeological research is prohibited so as not to risk evidence emerging that the country has any shared history with neighbouring Ethiopia. After independence, the Eritrean state also decided to co-fund the Red Sea Press to ensure the publication of material demonstrating Eritrea's history as distinct from that of Ethiopia. Sudan has similar initiatives showing its history to be independent of that of Egypt. Meanwhile Rwanda's national museum mentions no ethnic groups in its displays, even when iron-age migrations are presented – Rwanda's post-colonial and post-genocide realities make ethnicity something to be avoided, and so the present is imposed on the past.

With reference to archaeological and historical studies in Africa, and with a special focus on two examples of research projects underway in Mozambique, this chapter aims to highlight the importance of independent research on cultural heritage in all its forms. In our view, while heritage conservation is certainly a matter of resource allocation that requires an emphasis on research and good management, it is also a matter of human rights – the right to *correct information* about your own historical and cultural heritage.

Archaeological and ethnographic research

Archaeological research in Africa has always been uneven. Countries such as South Africa, Egypt and some of Britain's other former colonies have a strong tradition of archaeological research, management and dissemination: archaeology is a prominent discipline in the universities, and national museums and antiquities services disseminate and manage many aspects of cultural heritage. Furthermore, national legislation on cultural heritage inherited from the former colonial power tends to remain in place. This ensures that major road works, as well as city and agricultural development projects, have to present environmental impact assessments before development can begin; and when archaeological excavations prove necessary, the developer is expected to cover these costs. Countries such as these are the exception in Africa, however. In far more cases, antiquity services have little access to power or resources, universities don't offer archaeology degrees, and national museums lack both funding and conservation expertise.

One of the reasons for this situation is the lack of importance accorded to 'culture' in the discourse of development. Culture and heritage are seldom mentioned in countries' development plans or in priorities agreed between donors and recipient countries. Development priorities tend to be set by donor

nations, and culture is decidedly not among their major objectives. We are not arguing that culture should be accorded a higher priority than health and education. However, the need to compare and prioritise between obviously worthy causes tends to be overstated when budgets are being calculated. It is also worth noting that while Western countries place strong emphasis and importance on their own cultural heritage, similar focus is seldom accorded to development interventions. Thus donor countries blithely allocate millions dollars of state support to protecting and developing their own 'culture' in its many forms (in museums, dissemination and cultural tourism), yet virtually always overlook this element when addressing the needs of African countries. Debates about how culture and heritage may contribute to development and national unity in aid-receiving countries are seldom heard, despite the efforts of programmes such as Africa 2009,³ which aimed to include cultural heritage in the development agenda and build competence in heritage management.

Historical studies: towards a corpus of written sources of the African past

The first conference on African history took place in 1953, and presented, according to Vansina (1994: 51), 'information derived from archaeology and oral traditions'. By the 1960s, African history, as a scholarly discipline, stood on the threshold of unprecedented expansion, both in Africa and elsewhere. Driven by initiatives such as the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* (FHA)⁴ initiated in 1962, historians began orienting themselves towards written sources – European, African and, increasingly, Arabic. A series of projects grew focusing on the publication of non-European sources for African history. The Centre for Arabic Documentation in Ibadan, Nigeria is one example; established in 1964, it soon began to issue regular bulletins on written sources of African history. These bulletins, alongside those of other similar undertakings, made it clear that written sources existed in abundance, not only in Arabic but also in local languages written in Arabic script. In sum, as John Hunwick once observed, it became evident that *'l'Afrique ne seulement danse, il pense'*.⁵

In other words, the efforts of researchers in the 1960s and 1970s disproved the claim that Africa's written tradition began with the arrival of European colonialists and missionaries. Rather, it became clear Africa's scriptural traditions began centuries earlier, and dated back to the arrival of Islam in various regions between the eighth and nineteenth centuries. With Islam came cultural practices, architectural styles, and the Arabic language and Arabic script – all of which now form aspects of African cultural heritage. As the basis of religious worship, Arabic and Arabic letters were essential as the language of prayer, and mastering them became a religious duty usually

undertaken by community leaders. However, Arabic did not remain solely a language of ritual nor of inter-ethnic communication. Arabic script became the means through which several African languages, including Hausa, Fulfulde, Songhay, Yoruba, Swahili and Malagasy, were first written down. In other words, Africans modified the Arabic alphabet for their own use, adding sounds that were lacking or changing letters to fit their needs. These adaptations are known collectively as *ajami* script – that is Arabic script used for languages other than Arabic.⁶

Thus, by the time European mission schools and colonial administrations were established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, literacy – understood as a system for presenting one’s language in writing – was already an established social fact in many parts of the African continent. Despite their omnipresence – and repeated attempts – colonial education systems did not fully replace these pre-existing modes of writing. Rather, knowledge transfer using *ajami* took place well into the colonial and post-colonial periods. Indeed, the practice of writing (manuscripts, letters, ritual/magic texts, and text-based ritual performances) continued in the face of both colonial rule and the growing presence of print culture as well as radio and film.

Ajami texts are widely distributed across the African continent. Perhaps the most famous collection is the one in Timbuktu, Mali, where an estimated 300 000 manuscripts are deposited in family-owned libraries, containing texts in a wide range of languages (including many in Arabic) (Diagne and Jeppie 2008).⁷ Beyond Timbuktu, several towns in Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Ghana have major collections. Further east, *ajami* texts are held in privately held family collections throughout Ethiopia (see Kawo 2008), while in Kenya, Tanzania/Zanzibar, Mozambique and the Comoros Islands, a rich tradition of Swahili/Comorian *ajami* exists in several private and public collections that are yet to be fully documented. Although several of these scripts, including substantial *tendi* (narrative poems) and chronicles, have been transliterated, edited and translated (see, for example, Allen 1971; Knappert 1964), much remains unexplored. In Madagascar, the presence of the *sorabe* script (literally meaning ‘large writing’ but referring to the Malagasy language in Arabic script) became an object of study for early European missionaries and scholars, and its origins are still debated (Munthe 1982; Versteegh 2001). Perhaps the most surprising case of *ajami* is to be found in Cape Town, South Africa, where so-called Arabic-Afrikaans texts are among the oldest examples of written tradition among Cape Muslims (Davids 1991; Jappie 2011; Van Selms 1951).

In more recent decades, various initiatives have raised the profile of the *ajami* tradition as a whole, focusing on traditional Islamic scholarship.⁸ In addition, the 'rediscovery' of Timbuktu's large manuscript collections spurred further efforts at conservation, digitisation, research and publications, and this highlighted Africa's written heritage to some extent. Nevertheless, the fact that Africa's long history of reading and writing predates European colonisation (by several centuries in some areas) remains relatively unknown.

Parallel to the development of African historical studies from the 1950s to the 1970s, came the establishment of new archives and museums for the conservation and dissemination of written material. However, academic research on the role of *ajami* in Africa has, since the 1960s and again in the 2000s, become a focus within the disciplines of history, and religious, literary and museum studies. Admittedly, some research was conducted from the point of view of philology during the colonial period. However, wider studies of the fundamental role of writing, the educational systems that formed the basis of textual production, the economy of texts, linguistic transfers from other languages (notably Arabic), the materiality of book-making, alphabetic adaptations into local scriptural traditions and the elaboration of written expressions remain largely unexplored. The study of African writing culture has the potential to address a whole range of questions pertaining to material, intellectual and political history, and to offer a view into Africa's pre-colonial past.

Several research paths have opened out which will all certainly lead to new knowledge about the history of African knowledge production. For example, there is a need to investigate *ajami* script itself and its uses in African contexts – *madrasas* (mosque schools) where writing was taught and where texts were studied and produced are of particular interest. In addition, more needs to be known about how books were produced and distributed, and about the repositories of these texts – who owned libraries and private collections, who used them and why?

Given these lacunae, it is not surprising that the conservation of Africa's written cultural heritage has received comparatively little attention at local, regional or national levels. The major exception here is Timbuktu in Mali, and also Nigeria and Niger,⁹ which have established specialised research facilities for the study and conservation of *ajami* manuscripts. In Timbuktu, although the current political situation renders the future of the manuscripts themselves highly insecure, several research and conservation programmes have digitised irreplaceable pieces of scriptural heritage.

Further south, in sub-Saharan Africa, *ajami* manuscripts and books have received especially low priority, both as historical sources and as cultural artefacts. One of the reasons for this is clear: reading and understanding these documents requires an expertise that very few people possess. *Ajami* is dying out in many local communities, having been supplanted by the Latin alphabet introduced by the colonial authorities and since favoured by post-colonial education systems. In addition, a renewed emphasis on standardised Arabic among Muslim communities generally (linked to the orientation towards Salafism, and sometimes a requirement for funding from the Middle East), is undermining these traditions among Muslims in Africa. In terms of Western scholarship, the marginalisation of *ajami* texts can also be partly explained by the fact that Arabic-language training and research has been closely tied to Middle Eastern studies, which has given little attention to sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, since Muslims find themselves in a minority in several sub-Saharan nations, it is perhaps understandable that there are few specialists in post-colonial administrations with the competence – or the will – to initiate research or conservation on this aspect of their countries' national heritage. Essentially, a real lack of resources has prevented conservation efforts in this field, as in many others.

The case of Mozambique: archaeological and scriptural research and management

Mozambique was ravaged by two wars, waged between 1964 and 1994, and is now home to one of the world's most impoverished nations. It has, however, launched a dynamic process of reconstruction, and is considered one of the region's success stories. It also holds one World Heritage Site – the colonial buildings of Mozambique Island.

The National Directorate for Cultural Heritage's (2003) strategic plan for 2003 to 2007 devotes particular attention to the intangible aspects of Mozambique's cultural heritage, arguing that these have been neglected in the past. There is also an increased awareness of the country's pre-colonial heritage. The so-called intangible aspects are particularly important when applied to rock art. However as shown below, aspects of rock art found in Mozambique that are often defined as intangible, are as tangible to local communities as any of the physical aspects of these sites.

Archaeological sites and studies

In 2003, an initiative of the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Bergen led to a three-year project supported by the Norwegian Agency

for Development Cooperation, whereby archaeologists and students from the University of Bergen in Norway, Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the University of Zimbabwe and the Malawi Department of Antiquities joined forces to conduct research in the Manica and Tete provinces of Mozambique and in the adjacent border areas within Zimbabwe and Malawi. Staff and students from all the institutions took part in the fieldwork, and field training for students was integrated into the process. The project was the first to include co-operation between South African and Mozambican archaeologists, and the first to arrange joint fieldwork between the four participating countries. The aim was to record and document elements of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the study areas (Sætersdal 2009). In Zimbabwe, the project worked closely with another ongoing project known as The Ancestral Landscape of Manyikaland, being run by the University of Bergen and the University of Zimbabwe's Archaeology unit, which is funded by the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education.

Archaeological activity since 2000 has increased our previously sketchy knowledge regarding the hunter-gatherer communities and original authors of the San art in the area. Research has revealed the presence of hunter-gatherer groups in this border region for the last 7 000 years. The earliest migration of Bantu-language speaking farmer groups into the area is dated to around 2 000 years ago (Phillipson 1993, Pikeray 1993). Archaeological surveys carried out in the Manica district of Mozambique's Manica province and on the Zimunya communal lands of Zimbabwe's Manyikaland province, have revealed over a hundred sites containing San rock paintings. Sites with finger painted images in the Bantu tradition are also found, but these are vastly outnumbered by hunter/gatherer art. At present we have no certain knowledge about the meeting and subsequent coexistence of hunter/gatherer and farmer groups in the area. Portuguese colonial documents make no reference to hunter/gatherers south of the Zambezi. The arrival of the present Shona-speaking population in the Manica area can be dated to approximately AD 1700. According to oral tradition the newly arrived groups quickly established control of the area (Beach 1980: 167)

At present, communities on both sides of the colonially imposed national borders speak a common language, a dialect of Shona also known as Manica, and they have incorporated certain San rock art sites within their ritual practices. Unlike in many other parts of southern Africa, the people of Manica were not moved off their ancestral lands during Mozambique's colonial period. Apart from a short period of local movement during the civil

war, the people have lived on the same land for generations; they have strong ties to the landscape in which their kings and ancestors are buried. While the post-independence government of Mozambique initially tried to rein in the traditional authorities and curb traditional religious practices, this did not succeed, and in more recent years traditional leaders have been officially recognised by the state as community leaders. In Manica, the paramount Chief Chirara is the eleventh chief of his dynasty. He resides near the royal burial caves of his ancestors in the Vumba Mountains, which lie on the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The chiefdom of Zimunya was also previously under Chief Chirara but became a separate chiefdom under an elected chief on the Zimbabwean side of the border when the modern state boundaries were drawn in 1891. The demarcation of the national boundary was negotiated between the British and the Portuguese, and local people had no say in the matter. Although it meant that any formal ties that the chiefdom had with Zimbabwe, or Southern Rhodesia as it was known at the time, were broken, the two chiefdoms continued to work very closely, and still often meet to rule in matters that concern people on either side of the border.

The ritual and religious life of the population is closely linked to the landscape and their ancestral beliefs exist alongside the Catholicism brought in by missionaries. Ancestor spirits are believed to dwell in the land and in the waters (streams, lakes or springs) and to be approachable at certain places in the landscape – such as the burial place of someone important, an ancestor tree, or a place linked to a particular story or experience. Trees are thought to reach into the world of the ancestors, and springs to deliver water from deep within the ancestral world. Crevices and cracks in rock shelters are seen as places where snakes and lizards enter the ancestral dwellings. The rock art found in many such sites is perceived to be a form of communication from the ancestors, and it is held that if proper rituals are not observed when approaching or entering these sites the ancestors may choose not to display the paintings.

Ancestral sites are often linked to annual rainmaking and healing rituals. Some of the most prominent San rock art sites are used for such rites, and function as communication points with the ancestors. While the main activities of feasting and praying may not take place at the actual archaeological sites, beer is brought to the site and offered to the ancestors in front of the painted panels.

The Manica spirit world is seen as being as dynamic as the real world, and a mirror image of our reality. When a person dies he or she becomes a *mudzumi* (pl. *midzimu*), an ancestor spirit. A whole lifetime of accumulated knowledge

and experience it believed to be available to the living via ancestor spirits who are seen as a resource to be drawn upon and consulted when guidance, protection or divination is needed (Abrahams 1966; Lan 1985). Since worldly worries and problems no longer hinder the dead, they are thought to devote their whole attention to guiding and protecting their families. They are believed to be capable of seeing into the future and may offer advice on how to avoid impeding dangers and be called upon to cure illnesses. Having no material form, the ancestors are not bound by time or space, and can be at all places at all times in the form of *mweya*, (breath or air). However, the spirits are believed to have sensory experiences, eyesight, hearing and emotions (Lan 1985). Since the spirits exist in a mirror image world of our own, it is thought they too age and fade away as new spirits are 'born' – that is, when younger relations die into the spirit world. Elders die and younger people take over as spiritual leaders, which is the dynamic of any such elder-based knowledge system. Older spirits die and new ones take their place, as *midzimu* or ancestor spirits. Hence the two spheres of humans and spirits are constantly changing. Yet when the community gathers for rainmaking ceremonies, or their spirit mediums carry out divination rituals in front of the paintings, their own oral tradition is key. And placing the rock-paintings in the realm of the spirits gives the images an authenticity that is accepted by all present.

Archaeology and anthropology go hand in hand in many places, not only in Africa. However, working in Mozambique made us realise that such sites are not 'dead' places void of current meaning but 'live' sites imbued with meaning for local people and with layers of stories accumulated through time.

Archaeological research in Manica and Zimunya is therefore carried out in accordance with the traditional systems of knowledge and governance; researched areas are entered only with the chief's permission and in the company of an appointed guide who can perform the appropriate ancestor rituals. This close contact with the local communities means that their intimate knowledge of the area, its ancestral sites and rock art sites, is shared. The researchers and villagers are slowly building a relationship of trust and collaboration, and it is hoped that this will feed into joint planning for the future management and conservation of the rock art sites and the traditions associated with them.

Thus, the aim of the research projects is not to simply identify the sites and leave the local communities to look after them. Instead, the rock art sites are conceptualised as falling within the larger scope of *cultural heritage*. This involves expanding the framework of our research beyond the usual archaeological concerns with images, sites and particular readings of arts and

contexts, to include a much wider set of relevant meanings and values. These multiple meanings and values are generated by the actions and perceptions of different *stakeholders*, whose multiple agendas may at times be conflicting, and among whom we find ourselves as archaeologists.

Written historical sources: Mozambican *ajami*

When it comes to sources for historical studies, the northern provinces of Mozambique are home to an *ajami* writing tradition. For centuries, the region was an integrated part of the Swahili cultural continuum, frequented by dhows from the trading centres to the north, the Comoros Islands, as well as from the coastal cities of Yemen and Oman (Alpers 2001; Bonate 2010b; Hafkin 1973; Newitt 1997).

From the point of view of Islamic history, the interconnections between the coastal mainland of Mozambique and other centres in the Indian Ocean have received scant research attention when compared to better-known sites in Tanzania and Kenya (including Lamu, Mombasa, Zanzibar and Kilwa). Since 2000, however, research has emerged that places the Muslim communities of northern Mozambique within the cultural, historical and religious continuum of the Swahili coast and its interconnections in the Indian Ocean. At the time of writing, Bonate's (2007) study of the Sufi brotherhoods in the region was the most complete analysis of religious and family networks. At the same time, preliminary studies conducted on *ajami* material from the region point towards a scriptural Islamic culture that communicated in Arabic, Swahili and local languages.¹⁰ However, as Bonate has pointed out, historical, ethnographic and linguistic research is still severely lacking when it comes to the histories of these communities. Earlier research has hesitated to characterise coastal, Muslim communities in northern Mozambique as 'Swahili', with the definition of 'Swahili' constructed in terms of language and networks. Yet the question remains as to what influences were present in the coastal regions of northern Mozambique.

A substantial collection of letters in Mozambique's National Archives bear witness to the use of *ajami* for communication among KiMwani, Ekoti, Esangaji, Yao and Makua speakers. In addition, some people of the region wrote in Swahili using Arabic script. Bonate and Mutiua (2011) carried out a preliminary study of this collection, and included the correspondence that was sent to the Portuguese government from local rulers and other stakeholders, all written in *ajami* script. A total of 782 documents were studied, and of these, 568 originated in the district of Cabo Delgado and the remainder from Nampula province. The majority of the documents date from the mid-to-late

nineteenth century, that is, the period that saw increased Islamic missionary activity and the expansion of Sufism in East Africa.

Textual material may also be privately held throughout northern Mozambique, but this remains entirely unexplored. As far as can be ascertained, private collections are likely to contain information on genealogy and family histories, and may thus shed light on transformations with local and regional power alliances, and on the emergence of new lineages and chiefdoms through the processes of migration and conquest. Furthermore, such documents may also shed light on important aspects of the local cultural practices and traditions. Islamic history is a very neglected field in Mozambique and there is simply no overview of documents that may be in private hands. However, as has been shown by studies in Tanzania, such material can provide valuable insight into religious life, literary and linguistic developments, healing, divination, dream reading, amulet writing etc. Like the San rock art sites discussed, these traditions are still very much alive, and must be understood in the context of both localised forms of Islam as well as of the specific local meanings attached to the Arabic alphabet and language, including formulas and symbols.

The varied contexts in which these texts must be understood, pose many challenges and underscore the value of multi-disciplinarity. However, they also pose problems on the basic level of interpretation, as knowledge of the *ajami* form is fast disappearing. Even in Kenya and Tanzania, where the most widespread *ajami* form is Swahili (a much more widely understood and researched language), there is not enough competence in either country to survey, catalogue and preserve (let alone conduct historical interpretations) of the known material. In Mozambique, where *ajami* sources exist in lesser-researched languages, competent staff are extremely scarce – a fact that challenges research and conservation efforts. As noted by Bonate (2007; 2008), traditionally trained scholars are essential to the interpretation of these documents – both in the literal sense, and in terms of securing what Lambek (1990) calls the full, local hermeneutics of the texts. Efforts are being made to train at least one master's student in the reading and interpretation of northern Mozambican *ajami*, and hopefully more scholars will be trained in the near future to interpret and disseminate information about this aspect of Mozambique's written heritage.

Cultural heritage and the post-colonial nation state

Cultural heritage is a complex and context-dependent concept. It may mean very different things on very different scales in different contexts.

The rock paintings of Manica undoubtedly form an important national cultural resource that may be used to symbolise a proud pan-Mozambican, pre-colonial, past. However, they also form part of the specific cultural heritage of the people of Manica, and it is their cultural right to use them in building their own more specific cultural identity. Conversely, the *ajami* writings of the north may be construed as being specifically part of a Muslim tradition (and as such, religious in nature and conceivably of little interest for nation building). Indeed, in some situations, the presence of a transnationally oriented population, with extensive historical links to cultural and religious centres beyond the nation, may even be construed as harmful and actively suppressed. In the case of Manica, both the Portuguese colonialists and the early independent government under Samora Machel tried unsuccessfully to curb the traditional cultural and religious system of the region; the Portuguese by a policy of invisibility and Samora Machel with radical socialism. When it comes to the *ajami* writings, the most enduring management policy to date has been indifference from archives, museums and research institutions; a tradition only recently broken by the renewed interest in written sources relating to Africa's pre-colonial past.

However, when looking at Mozambican cultural heritage and its role in nation building, it is important that the past should build a bridge towards the future. Development is closely connected with the past, and may be legitimised with reference to the pre-colonial history. On another level, it is important for Mozambique to try to reconstruct the pre-colonial past without denying that the last 500 years were of any consequence. The present independent state of Mozambique is, of course, a completely different entity conceptually, physically and culturally to anything that existed prior to 1498. Hence the importance of cultural heritage will be the extent to which it comes to represent the remains of what existed 'on the way to becoming what Mozambique is today'. Cultural heritage is what we inherit from those who may have been like us in some respects but who were also very different from us in other respects.

The 1992 ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value states that 'undisturbed constancy of spiritual association may be more important than the physical aspects'.¹¹ This underlines the importance of indigenous spiritual association with certain sites and areas. Archaeology must avoid being seen as an alien and potentially dangerous university discipline, removed from the real context that it encounters in the field. As Trigger (1994: 31) states:

If archaeology is to play a useful role in a democratic society, it must seek to provide a more accurate understanding of the past that will enable those who wish to do so to derive enjoyment from archaeological findings and to draw their own conclusions about human history and human nature.

People may have their own understanding of their own past which, with proper care and knowledge, should not compete with archaeology and the management of cultural resources and heritage. Rather these understandings should inspire communities to value and respect all aspects of their cultural heritage.

It is hoped that in future, the increased dissemination of knowledge about the physical heritage of Mozambique – and other African countries – will lead to the realisation that this heritage is a common one, and not exclusive to any one group or community. It is hoped that this will promote understanding and thus a deeper awareness of current social structures and traditions within and between groups locally, translocally and internationally.

Notes

- 1 Place here means ‘site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views’ as defined in Article 1.1 of Australia’s 1999 Burra Charter (more formally known as The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance). Available online.
- 2 ‘Intangible heritage’ refers to the cultural fabric of a place, its setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects.
- 3 See www.africa2009.net
- 4 The FHA was initiated after the United Nations declared the 1960s the ‘Decade of Development’. The International Academic Union, consisting of national academies of science worldwide was charged by UNESCO to set up Africa-related activities, and the FHA was one such initiative.
- 5 Personal communication, RS O’Fahey, 16 December 2010.
- 6 The word *ajami* derives from the Arabic word for foreign or stranger.
- 7 For an overview of conservation efforts in Timbuktu before 2012, see contributions by Abdel Kader Haidara, Ismaël Diedié Haidara and Haoua Taore, Mukhtar bin Yahya al-Wangari and Muhammad Ould Youbba in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, edited by Jeppie and Diagne (2008). In 2012, at least one of the major conservation institutions, the Ahmed Baba Institute, was ransacked and looted by rebel forces. It is unclear whether the manuscripts are safe or not. The question remains open as to what will happen to these conservation efforts in the current troubled situation in northern Mali.

- 8 Among the most exhaustive reference works are *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vols 1 (1993), 2 (1995), 3 (2002) and 5 (forthcoming) by John O Hunwick and RS O’Fahey, published by Brill.
- 9 Department of Arabic and Ajami Manuscripts, Human Sciences Research Institute, Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey.
- 10 See Bonate (2008; 2010a); and Bonate and Mutiua (2011) – the documents in Arabic script form part of an extensive collection (most of it in Portuguese) that exists in the Mozambique National Archives and which concerns this region.
- 11 See the revised 2010 edition at http://www.icomos.org.nz/docs/NZ_Charter.pdf.

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